

Summary of Research on Classroom Settlement Orientations

The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Citizenship and Immigration Canada or the Government of Canada.

This research was commissioned by the Information and Orientation Team, of Integration Branch at Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

In the summer of 2012, CIC's Integration Branch engaged Goss Gilroy Consulting to conduct a survey of in-Canada, classroom orientation sessions offered to newcomers. There were three main deliverables: the design of a survey, the undertaking of the survey and a report on the findings of the survey. This document is a summary of the finding of the latter.

Background

A significant amount of CIC settlement funding (vote 5) is used to support classroom settlement orientation for prospective and recently arrived newcomers. Despite this, there is little information available on what these orientation sessions look like (for example, what topics they cover and their duration) and how they compare across Canada. There is currently no national standard for group orientation sessions though at CIC management has expressed increasing interest in developing national standards.

The objective of the research undertaken was to profile group orientation sessions across Canada in order to help policy makers better understand the current system and to provide information to assist in the development of a national standard for group orientations.

Methodology

Goss Gilroy Consulting, working closely with the Information and Orientation (I&O) Team-Integration Branch, developed a 73 question survey on group settlement orientations in Canada (see Annex X). The survey was piloted with some local service providers before being fully undertaken.

The Information and Orientation (I&O) Team identified a sample of 60 service provider organizations (SPOs) for potential participation in the survey. Goss Gilroy then contacted these SPOs and conducted the survey by telephone with an e-mail follow-up. A total of 46 survey questionnaires were completed, with interviewees from each province. This represents a 77 percent response rate in relation to the surveyed sample, and 19 percent of the estimated population of SPOs doing group orientations in Canada.

Key Findings

Across the country there is large variation in the profile of group orientations. As a result Goss Gilroy presented much of its summary data as medians and not averages¹. The following table summarizes some of the key findings on group orientations.

Table: Key Findings of Research on Group Orientations

Key Findings	Data
Group orientations reach a lot of newcomers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Surveyed SPOs delivered a median of 45 classroom-based orientation-to-Canada sessions per year – roughly 1 per week – to a median of 15 participants per class.• The research estimated that <i>160,000</i> newcomers a year participate in classroom orientation sessions.
Group orientations sessions vary considerably in duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On average, orientation sessions last over 4 and a half hours. However, five respondents reported that their sessions last one or several days. The median for the session duration is 2 hours.
Most sessions are delivered in English or French though there is significant use of interpretation services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 60 percent of responding SPOs reported using interpretation services during classes to ensure that participants understand the content in their native language.• 21.8 percent of responding SPOs report delivering sessions in other languages including
There is no standard demographic profile of who receive an orientation session.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Median age was estimated at 35 years.• The median female/male split was estimated at 60/40.• Median length of time in Canada for participants was estimated at 7 months.• A median of 70 percent of participants were estimated as having at least some post secondary education.• Economic Class immigrants, at 39.5 percent, was the median largest class of immigrants, as estimated by respondents.
The provision of orientation sessions is planned and uses a curriculum, often with federal government materials integrated. There is a high degree of customization in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most orientation sessions (86.9%) are scheduled in advance.• Most (71.7%) follow a pre-set curriculum developed by the SPO.• Over half of responding SPOs (56.8%) reported using materials available from the federal government.• Roughly half of responding SPOs (50.0% and 47.7%

¹ In the report both mean and median statistics are used to represent central tendency, i.e. average. Mean is used when the distribution is relatively normal. Median is used when the distribution is skewed.

these sessions to the needs of newcomers.	<p>respectively) reported using locally produced materials and materials supplied by their provincial government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most respondents (77.8%) reported delivering a variety of sessions tailored to the needs of particular participant groups.
CIC online resources are well integrated into the classroom orientations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of responding SPOs (80%) reported using online resources during classroom based orientation sessions. • The most commonly cited website was the CIC website, referred to by 75.8 percent of SPOs that use online resources.
Orientation session topics largely mirror those of Welcome to Canada/SIRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The four most popular topics for classroom orientations are: employment and income (100%), sources of information (97.8%), education (97.8%); and health (95.7%)
CIC is by far the dominant funder of group orientation sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On average, 90.0 percent of this funding reportedly came from CIC.
There is openness to the federal government playing an increased role in the provision of group orientations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85 percent of respondents felt that new, standard orientation materials provided by CIC would be at least “moderately useful” (with 35% stating “very useful” and 20% stating “extremely useful”). • When asked what role the federal government should play in the future with respect to orientation sessions for newcomers, 78.0 percent of respondents said, “funding plus materials that may be used by organizations at the organization's discretion;” 17.1 percent said, “funding plus materials, some of which would include national level information in order to continue to receive funding.” • Only 4.9 percent said, “same role as today, i.e., funding but providing no materials or guidance.” • No respondents said that they saw no role for the federal government.